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Arkansas Agriculture Department Announces FY 2016 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Request for Applications

STATEWIDE, ARK. – The Arkansas Agriculture Department is now accepting applications for funding through the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. Grants administered through the program will help fund opportunities to enhance Arkansas's specialty crop industry. Arkansas specialty crops include fruits, vegetables, floriculture and nuts.

Eligible applicants include non-profit organizations, local, state, and federal government entities, for-profit organizations and colleges and universities. To be eligible, project(s) must solely enhance the competitiveness of an Arkansas specialty crop, and they must benefit a specialty crop segment as a whole.

Proposals may include projects such as: research, promotion, marketing, nutrition, food safety and security, education, increased knowledge and consumption, improved efficiency and reduced costs of distribution systems, conservation, product development, good agricultural practices, good handling practices, and good manufacturing practices.

"Specialty crops are an important aspect and a growing segment of Arkansas's agriculture industry. The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program ultimately benefits Arkansas specialty crop producers and allows for continued growth," said Arkansas Agriculture Secretary Wes Ward.

Arkansas's allocation for Fiscal Year 2016 will be approximately \$294,000. Applications must be submitted to the Arkansas Agriculture Department by May 4, 2016.

Additional guidelines and instructions on completing and submitting an application, including the full Request for Applications (RFA), is available at www.aad.arkansas.gov. For any additional information please contact the Arkansas Agriculture Department's Director of Marketing, Christian Olson at (501) 219-6324 or email christian.olson@aad.ar.gov.

The Arkansas Agriculture Department is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture and forestry to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation.

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The Arkansas Agriculture Department offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.